Hospital chief steps down

Farr guided changing Penrose-St. Francis

By **Wayne Heilman**/Gazette Telegraph

Al Farr resigned Wednesday as president of the Penrose-St. Francis Health Care System after leading El Paso County's largest hospital system through nearly four years of mergers and cutbacks.

Farr, 48, had spent 19 years as a health care executive in Colorado Springs. On Jan. 15, he will become corporate vice president of United HealthCare Corp., one of the nation's largest health maintenance organizations.

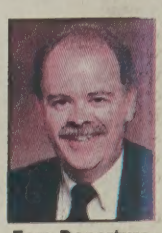
"Al's departure is a real loss. He is one of the outstanding health care executives in the nation. Someone else's gain is our loss," said Gary Susnara, chief executive of Sisters of Charity Colorado, owners of Penrose-St. Francis.

Farr turned down an executive post with the Minneapolis-based insurance company five years ago, but only began discussing its latest offer a month ago, he said.

After Farr's Jan. 5 departure, the senior official for the system will be Donna Bertram, who has been senior vice president and chief operating officer of the system since 1991.

Farr leaves Penrose-St. Francis with Sisters of Charity Health Services Colorado about a month away from approval of a restructuring plan. James Hertel, a Denver-based health care industry analyst, said the plan likely will eliminate the chief executive posts at Penrose-St. Francis and three other Sisters of Charity hospital systems in the state.

See **FARR**/B2



Farr: Departure a "real loss" for Penrose-St. Francis.

12-14-95

Kirk Speer/Gazette Telegraph

Praying in Palmer Park

Some of about 75 people pray and sing at a vigil Wednesday night in Palmer Park. Nuns from the Benet Hill Monastery organized the event to send a message against crime and homosexual activity in the park. Area residents supported the monastery's effort to reclaim the park. Mary Guidry, 44, who lives nearby, joined in the event. "What's been going on has me worried. . . . I hike and walk here, and I hate to see the way it's deteriorated."

Gazette Telegraph 12-14-95

Man arrested in women's deaths

By **Kelly Pearce** and **Dennis Huspeni**/Gazette Telegraph

A man arrested Wednesday in the killing of two gay-rights activists last week in Medford, Ore., probably did not know they were lesbians, an official at the Jackson County District Attorney's Office said.

Robert James Acremant, 27, was arrested in Stockton, Calif. He faces two counts of aggravated murder in the deaths of former Colorado Springs residents Roxanne Ellis, 53, and Michelle Abdill, 42. The women's bodies were found bound and gagged in the back of Ellis' pickup truck last Thursday. They had each been shot twice in the head.

Acremant might be extradited to Oregon later this week.

Robert Acremant, who recently moved to Medford from California, was taken into custody outside a Stockton motel after police officers spotted his moving van in the parking lot, said Sgt. Billy Wykert, a Stockton Police Department spokesman.

Acremant's father, Kenneth Acremant of Stockton, said Wednesday that police told him his son admitted killing the women.

While members of the gay community in both Colorado Springs and Medford believe it was a hate crime, Jackson County Chief Deputy District Attorney John Bondurant said that might not be true.

"We can't definitely rule out any particular motive," Bondurant said. "But on the other hand, we have nothing to suggest he even knew the two women were lesbians. . . . You can't assume that just because they were homosexual, that is the motive for it. You have to have proof."

Medford police have been inundated with calls to a hotline. One call led them to Acremant, who had been spotted near the apartment where the women were last seen alive.

Bondurant said Acremant met Ellis weeks ago when she showed him the duplex from which the two women were later abducted. Ellis showed the duplex again the day she was kidnapped, but authorities haven't said whom she showed it to.

Acremant had moved to Medford recently with his mother, who lives within blocks of where the bodies of the two women were found.

The victims, who lived and worked together, moved from Colorado Springs to Medford in 1990. While living in Colorado Springs, Ellis was a nurse's assistant and Abdill was co-owner of a catering company.

A memorial service and vigil for Ellis and Abdill will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 2026 W. Colorado Ave.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Associated Press

Police officers escort homicide suspect Robert James Acremant from the Stockton, Calif., police annex Wednesday.

Root out teen crime, group says

Report urges tackling causes

By **Erin Emery**
Gazette Telegraph

A report to be released today by Citizens' Goals outlines what Colorado Springs can do to prevent the next generation of its children from becoming criminals.

The report from the nonprofit group stresses that teen violence will only get worse unless its root causes — neglect, abuse, lack of values, boredom and deterioration of the family — are tackled by the community. It will be released at 10 a.m. today at Citizens' Goals offices at 219 W. Colorado Ave.

The report is the third significant effort in the past month to address the emerging problem of youth crime and violence in Colorado Springs.

Two weeks ago, the Gazette Telegraph analyzed crime statistics from the Colorado Springs Police Department and found that the numbers don't support the perception that the city has become a more dangerous place. In fact, the chance of

See **CRIME**/B2

Crime/Efforts under way to curtail violence

From B1

becoming a crime victim in Colorado Springs is the same as in a city with a population of less than 50,000.

The statistics, however, do indicate the number of Springs teens committing crimes is on the rise — although at a lesser rate than nationwide. Juveniles make up 11 percent of the city's population but account for about 38 percent of the arrests for all serious crimes — murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft. And there's been a notable increase in the number of teens arrested for violent crime, which includes murder, rape, robbery and assault. From 1985 to 1994, violent crimes by teens rose from 59 to 211 — a 258 percent increase.

Citizens' Goals, although acknowledging that treatment and prosecution are legitimate tools in fighting crime, is focusing on ways to change attitudes, support families and neighborhoods and coordinate agencies that serve young people.

A separate effort by City Council members Lisa Are Cook and Bill Guman, is seeking more immediate answers. Their group will study a proposal to outlaw the sale of spray paint and indelible pens to juveniles, increase fines for playing loud music on car stereo systems, and enact a package of laws to curtail gang activity.

The third effort is headed by Judy Guthrie. A concerned parent, Guthrie organized an anti-crime rally last month that drew 1,000 people downtown as well as a follow-up town hall meeting.

Guman said he hopes all of the emerging groups can meet to ensure that efforts aren't duplicated.

Guthrie, too, thinks there's plenty to do to combat teen violence — but it starts with the individual.

"There are a lot of agencies and government, places where people can go for help," Guthrie said. "But it truly goes back to concerned citizens and concerned parents who want to do something."

Farr/Penrose-St. Francis head taking post with HMO

From B1

"I realized that with the new state organization, there is no need for a chief executive position at each hospital system," Farr said. ". . . I saw that a lot of things in my job were redundant. If I didn't take advantage of this opportunity, it would be more difficult to do so in the future."

The Catholic health care giant is in the midst of three major mergers that will transform it into the state's largest health care provider. It eventually will own 66 hospitals in 20 states generating $4 billion a year.

Last July, the Cincinnati-based religious order merged its six Colorado hospitals into a single organization. Early next year, the order will merge its operations across the nation with two other Catholic hospital chains. Sisters of Charity today will unveil a $1 billion joint venture with Denver-based Porter-Care Adventist Health System of Colorado.

Susnara said a health care consultant is drawing up the restructuring plan.

When he resigned, Farr was in the middle of a two-year plan to cut 400 jobs and $40 million in operating costs at Penrose-St. Francis in response to pressure from insurance companies to cut costs. In April 40 middle managers were laid off, but Farr said most of the remaining cuts will be accomplished by not filling job openings.

Last year, Farr converted St. Francis Hospital, a facility near downtown that he ran for nine years, from a full-service hospital to a health center that houses a collection of outpatient and long-term care units. During the early 1990s, he presided over major expansion projects at Penrose Hospital and Penrose Community Hospital.

Farr cited the system's formation of one of the city's largest medical practices with 59 doctors and physician assistants as one of his most important accomplishments. He also cited the record $19 million in profits and $220 million in revenue reported by Penrose-St. Francis for the fiscal year ended June 30.

AL FARR

Career highlights of Penrose-St. Francis Healthcare System President Al Farr:

- **1991:** Becomes president and chief executive of Penrose-St. Francis after Sister Myra James Bradley resigns to take a job in Cincinnati.
- **1987:** Named senior vice president of Penrose-St. Francis after merger of the Penrose and St. Francis hospital systems.
- **1978:** Becomes president of St. Francis Healthcare System, owner of St. Francis Hospital.
- **1976:** Transferred to Colorado Springs by Charter Medical Corp. to run the financially troubled Colorado Springs Community Hospital, which would be acquired by Penrose in 1978 and renamed Penrose Community Hospital. He had held management posts at hospitals in Shreveport, La., and Wichita, Kan.

Source: Penrose-St. Francis Healthcare System.

All the fun that's fit to print.
The GT's comic pages are full of laughs every day.

BRIEFING

Springs residents guilty of drug sales: A federal jury in Denver on Wednesday found three Colorado Springs residents and a fourth man — all professed members of a notorious street gang — guilty of trafficking methamphetamines.

James Carl Maass, 35, the purported leader of the Banditos, Daniel B. Flores, 21, and Shannon E. McKane, 23, all of Colorado Springs, were found guilty of distribution of methamphetamines and conspiracy. Maass also was found guilty of carrying a gun while drug trafficking.

Jason M. Haley, 21, who has no address, was found not guilty of conspiracy but guilty of distribution of methamphetamines and carrying a firearm while drug trafficking.

The federal case stems from a three-month investigation begun in late 1994 by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms into the gang's drug and weapons activities.

State officials allege Maass also was the triggerman in the killing of Sherrie Annette Holmes, whose bludgeoned body was found Jan. 5 in a snow-covered field in Elbert County about 45 miles northeast of Colorado Springs. The Colorado Springs woman, 24 and six months pregnant at the time, died when she was shot six times in the head.

Maass and Octavio A. Jacquez Jr., 38, are charged with two counts of first-degree murder, second-degree kidnapping and conspiracy to commit murder and kidnapping in connection with the case.

Jail dispute linked to towels: A dispute among Colorado prisoners housed in a Texarkana, Texas, jail may have centered on how towels were hung in the inmates' living quarters, Colorado Department of Corrections officials said Wednesday.

Three prison administrators and two caseworkers flew to Texas late Monday to investigate a mini-riot among about 80 Colorado inmates.

No one was injured in the 3 a.m. melee Monday that lasted 20 minutes, but toilets, beds and other pieces of furniture were destroyed, prison officials said. They estimated the inmates caused about $40,000 damage.

Ben Griego, director of offender services for Colorado, said there are about 168 inmates housed on the second floor of the three-story Bowie County (Texas) Correctional Facility. Because it's a dormlike setting, many of the inmates hung towels and blankets in an effort to gain privacy. The fracas began when guards ordered the inmates to remove the towels and blankets because they blocked their ability to monitor the inmates' activities.

In June, Colorado sent 500 prisoners to Bowie County to ease crowding in facilities here. The first riots occurred days after the inmates' arrival, and numerous disturbances — both large and small — have broken out since then.

Meeting on action plan tonight: The third meeting in a round of sessions aimed at creating a vision for the future of Colorado Springs will be held tonight.

Participants in the Springs Community Action Plan project will meet 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Antlers Doubletree Hotel, 4 S. Cascade Ave. Participation is free and open to the public.

The planning project was requested by the Colorado Springs City Council; The National Civic League, a nonprofit municipal assistance group, is managing the project.

Tonight's meeting is the third and last in an initial round of sessions that will produce a citywide vision statement.

Gazette Telegraph news services

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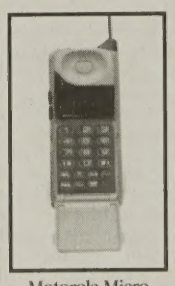
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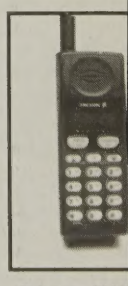
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